

**VALLEY CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED
GATORADE ARIZONA GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (January 23, 2023) — In its 38th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, Gatorade today announced **Lauren Ping** of **Valley Christian High School** is the **2022-23 Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Player of the Year**. Ping is the first Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Player of the Year to be chosen from Valley Christian High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Ping as Arizona's best high school girls cross country player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Girls Cross Country Player of the Year award to be announced in January, Ping joins an elite alumni association of state award-winners, including Natalie Cook (2021-22, Flower Mound High School, Flower Mound, Texas), Katelyn Tuohy (2019-20, North Rockland High School, Thiels, N.Y.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester High School, Rochester Hills, Mich.) and Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Preparatory Catholic High School, San Luis Obispo, Calif.).

The state's three-time returning Gatorade Player of the Year as a former student at Desert Vista High School, the 5-foot-10 senior raced to the Division 4 individual state championship this past season with a time of 17:53.2, leading the Trojans to fourth place as a team. Ping also won the Fountain Hills Invitational, finished eighth at the Desert Twilight Festival and took 19th at the Champs Sports West Regional Championships.

Ping has volunteered locally at Project Gold Running Camp and also participated in a school service project in which students volunteer at local churches. "Following three years of winning state titles in the highest classification in the state, Lauren Ping elevated to another division and captured a fourth career cross country championship in her first season as a student at Valley Christian," said Erik Boal, an editor at DyeStat.com. "Her victory added to one of the most remarkable resumes in Arizona prep distance running history."

Ping has maintained a 3.44 GPA in the classroom. She has signed a National Letter of Intent to run on scholarship at Oklahoma State University this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners in each sport.

Four-time winner Ping joins recent Gatorade Arizona Girls Cross Country Players of the Year Abi Archer (2018-19, Chaparral High School), among the state's list of former award winners.

Being a Gatorade Player of the Year means paying it forward for the next generation. Through Gatorade's Play it Forward initiative, every Player of the Year receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners, supporting Gatorade's ambition to fuel the future of sport. To date, Gatorade Player of the Year winners' grants have totaled more than \$3.5 million across more than 1,300 organizations.

For nearly 40 years, Gatorade has honored high school athletes at the top of their game as teammates, supporting their communities and achieving academic success. From CEOs and coaches to star athletes and community leaders, Gatorade Player of the Year winners showcase the power of sport.

To learn more about the Gatorade Player of the Year program, check out past winners or to nominate student-athletes, visit playeroftheyear.gatorade.com or follow us on social media on Facebook at facebook.com/GatoradePOY, Instagram at instagram.com/Gatorade and Twitter at twitter.com/Gatorade.